

LTC – LOVE AS DISEAS WITH MAGICAL REALISM



Submitted to: Islam Khan

Submitted by: SABA NAZ

CMS # 401904

M. Phil English Literature

Riphah International University Lahore

Email: mmahfah@yahoo.com

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Love in the time of Cholera is the story about two lovers who separate and become able to meet only when they are old but their love never dies. Marquez has not used supernatural elements to develop the plot but the **SICKNESS**, and the way characters move and are plotted produces unexpected results. He tries to retrieve the sunken treasure of shipwreck, shows that without love all is futile, for neither Fermina in her loveless marriage nor Florentino in his loveless sex could find essence, which could give meaning to their acts. At the end, they both accept each other. That's where the life begins.

The title of the novel itself points towards the contradiction of polar opposites – love which is essential for life and cholera which symbolizes death. Eastern love legends have profoundness of love like that of Heer-Ranjha, Soni-Mahiwal, Shiri-Farhad, and Laila-Majnu, count on more forbidden and penalizing side of love where the lovers had to die. Here suffering shifts to **WAITING** and **WANTING**. Can anyone wait for so long? But when love turns into a plague, into a disease, into a mental obsession, then lovers wait for their love as the victims of cholera wait for death.

It appears quite odd that when Dr. Urbino dies trying to save his parrot, Florentino-and old man comes and professes his love to Fermina Daza: **“Fermina I have waited for this opportunity for more than half a century, to repeat to you my vow of eternal fidelity ad everlasting love”**. Consequently Fermina Daza becomes furious. The plot moves through past and present.

The plot is twisted and made cyclic by making it like a puzzle. The ‘**magical**’ is the **WAITING** and what’s ‘**real**’ is the **LOVE** and ‘**medium**’ is **DISEASE** to convey this idea. Thinking of marrying a widow is unconventional, especially, waiting for a married woman to become a widow. Marquez has made old man and woman his protagonists – like **Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway** and **Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay** – which are unconventional.

In many of his letters, Florentino expresses his feelings for her in term of sickness. He describes himself as a patient suffering from a disease which was at the time known to be caused by passion. He says that he’s taking medication, admitting that the real cause of his ailment is that he is crazy in love with her. He is suffering from his **MENTAL TURMOIL** – rather than from his physical complaints. He is suffered from the sickness – called love.

Plato for example considers in ‘Phaedrus’ the sudden overthrow of reason associated with falling in love as being an expression of madness. According to Aristophanes’ discourse, man was originally a **HERMAPHRODITE CREATURE** with four hands, four legs and two heads, so Zeus decided to split ‘him’ up. Since then, mankind is doomed to forever search his/her opposite half in love.

The ‘Pathological’ danger of losing such love comes from the risk of losing oneself in order to maintain the ideal of a unifying love. As Florentino loses himself – loses his mental peace about sexual ideals permanently with the loss of Fermina Daza. Both spend a long term sexual life in their circles but devoid of real love. Through their sufferings, writer presents the idea that ‘**sex and love**’ both pole apart because the persons with whom they share their bed and experience sexual pleasure, doesn’t mean that the persons are their lovers.

However a cold war begins in their personalities because they surrender their bodies to someone but their minds and feelings struggle for the acceptance of someone else. And this mental disturbance creates a sort of sickness in their personalities. Florentino and Fermina's love bases on **dominance and submission, abandonment and engulfment** with addition of six styles of love – romantic, friendly, playful, selfless, pragmatic, and manic which strengthen their feelings in love-sickness.

The novel also contradicts popular belief that old people can't marry. The ending of the novel is reminiscent of '**Veer-Zara**', movie directed by **Yash Chopra**. The Protagonists Veer and Zara meet in their old age; they had never expected to meet but live their entire life for each other and sacrificed their own interests. Unlike Veer, Florentino also bears imprisonment but inside the jail of his own feelings from where he couldn't escape even after having a number of sexual experiences with different women. And finally he meets Fermina on the ship.

At the end of the novel Fermina realizes, '**it is incredible how one can be happy for so many years in the mid of so many problems, damn it, and not really know if it was love or not**'. Here depicts the romantic attitude toward life, and his gullibility in it also made evident that the society believes that Fermina and Urbino are perfectly happy in their marriage, while the reality of the situation is not so ideal. Urbino had married Fermina not because he loved her but because of her seriousness. In spite of their contrary attitudes, they continue to live together. He also has a love affair with Barbara but the unhappy stable marriage rock through the end.

Contrary to what Captain and Zenaida supposed, they no longer felt like newlyweds, they were together in silence like an old married couple wary of life, **beyond the pitfalls of passion, beyond the brutal mockery of hope and**

the phantoms of disillusion beyond love. For they had live together long enough to know that love was always love, anytime and anyplace, but it was more solid the closer it came to death.

When Florentino and Fermina unite on the ship the world matters the least. As the ship reaches its last port, Fermina sees people whom she knows and frets that if they see her with Florentino, it was cause scandal. Florentino orders the Captain to raise the **YELLOW FLAG of CHOLERA**, which he does. Metaphorically, here cholera becomes synonymous with love and one person affected with lovesickness is Florentino himself. There remain no passengers on ship but Fermina, Florentino, the Captain, and his beloved. The captain sees Fermina's frosty eyelashes and Florentino's invincible power; he realizes that it is life, more than death that has no limits.

To cap up, the novel evokes the unmentioned conclusion initiated by J. Donne's poem '**Valediction Forbidding Mourning**'. Donne shows the parting of two lovers and compares them to twin compass, we see that ultimately Florentino and Fermina unite like twin compass. And Florentino's wait for '**fifty three years, seven months, and eleven days and nights: 'Forever**' – comes to an end. Actually Marquez has drawn parallel portrayal of married life devoid of love, and a sex life devoid of love. Love hurts when it comes to an end, while unfulfilled love can also be regarded as a form of sickness exhibits magic realism. Nonetheless, **LOVE** is a **MONSTER**, far more dangerous than any disease of the world but has magical power through which its victim is deceived.